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Democracy Dies in Darkness

Larry Hogan endorses Kelly Schulz for Maryland governor

Republican says his longtime friend is the only candidate seeking to continue his legacy

By Erin Cox

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Maryland Gov. Larry Hogan officially threw his support behind Kelly Schulz in the Republican primary race for governor on Tuesday, praising his former commerce secretary and longtime friend for her tenacity, intellect and commitment to continuing his legacy.

“There are an awful lot of people who want to be governor,” term-limited Hogan told a small ballroom of supporters at the Annapolis Waterfront Hotel before giving his “enthusiastic, 100 percent endorsement” of Schulz.

He said all the other candidates running want “to take us in a completely different direction. There’s only one candidate who has the experience, the ability and the desire to keep moving Maryland forward, to keep changing Maryland for the better, who can get the job done and can continue the legacy.”

Hogan has long stated his preference for Schulz over her chief competitor, Donald Trump-backed Del. Dan Cox (R-Frederick), in a race that reflects the fight for the direction of the Republican Party.

Schulz and Hogan represent a more traditional — and pragmatic — branch, while Cox has embraced much of the former president’s rhetoric, including repeating false claims that Trump won the 2020 presidential election.

Schulz, 53, focused her remarks on her priorities of addressing crime, having accountability in the education system, and promising to make Maryland the best state in the country for business.

“Where we need to be is safe, steady and prosperous,” Schulz said. “We’re going to treat the criminals like criminals and the police like heroes.”

She noted that a victory would make history, both as the state’s first female governor and the first time the Republican Party held the governor’s mansion for three consecutive terms.

Hogan has enjoyed unusually high approval ratings throughout his term, particularly for an overwhelmingly Democratic state. A Goucher Poll in October found that 68 percent of the people surveyed approved of Hogan, a job approval rating 15 points higher than President Biden’s.

Hogan signaled that he would try to use that popularity to help Schulz.

At the same time, Trump’s support could help boost Cox, given that the former president also has been popular among Maryland Republicans.

Schulz, who resigned in January, had been part of Hogan's Cabinet since his election, first serving as labor secretary and later leading the Department of Commerce. She has been a state delegate from Frederick County, where she opened a small cybersecurity firm. She has two adult sons, and highlighted that she spent her 20s as a college dropout working waitressing jobs and trying to support her family.

Hogan said he and Schulz have known each other for decades, and that she has "done a tremendous thing" rising to become a delegate and Cabinet member. He said she helped him launch his grass-roots organization Change Maryland in 2010, which later morphed into his 2014 campaign.

After telling reporters what a tremendous job Schulz would do as governor, he joked that it "should be easy for her" to be a better governor than him.

Schulz is running with Jeff Woolford, an Air Force veteran who served as a fighter pilot and flight surgeon. Woolford is also a former member of the Hogan administration, most recently working as an assistant health secretary.